

Miscellaneous

Drawer 134

John Wilkes Booth

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The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

John Wilkes Booth
Miscellaneous

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

DISCOVERY OF A SUSPICIOUS LETTER. *Washington, 2d.* The star says that a paper in cipher, found floating at Morehead City, N. C., on the 2d of May, has been turned over to the Government officials. It has been literally translated and is as follows:

WASHINGTON, April 15, 1865.

Dear John: I am happy to inform you that Pet has done his work well. He is safe, and Old Abe is in hell now. Sir, all eyes are on you; you must bring Sherman. Grant is in the hands of Old Gary. Red Sheers showed a lack of nerve in Seward's case, but he fell back in good order. Johnson must come; Old Crook has him in charge. Mind well that brother's oath, and you will have no difficulty. All will be safe and enjoy the fruits of our labor,
(Signed)

O. B.

6/5/65

J. WILKES BOOTH.

On the back of the letter are two endorsements, the first being, "Hon. N. S. O. Laham, Richmond, February 12, 1865, in relation to plans and means of burning the enemy's shipping, &c. Preparations are in the hands of Prof. McCullough, and are known to only one party. He asks the President to have an interview with General Harris, formerly M. C. from Missouri, on the subject." The other is, "the Secretary of State, at his convenience, will please see General Harris, and hear what plan he has, for *overcoming the difficulties heretofore experienced.*"

It would be a useless task to multiply the evidence; the chain is too closely connected, and needs no additional links. The testimony is before the public, and the world has rendered its verdict. This question being settled beyond all possibility of doubt, we will return to Booth.

Booth as an actor did not, except in some parts, deserve the exalted eulogiums bestowed on him. To use the words of an eminent New York critic, "in all acting that demanded delicate characterization, refined conception, or carefulness, Booth was at sea, but in strong physical parts, requiring much declamation, the due need of praise was not bestowed. His conception of Richard was vivid and original, and resembled very closely his father's great personation, which no one who had ever seen it, could forget." His Romeo was greatly admired and pronounced by competent judges a faultless piece of acting. Though the tubes of his throat were somewhat affected, his voice had not failed, and his charge to the cavalrymen, was as sharp and clear as in his palmiest days.

The disposition of the "star crossed" murderer of the President was not vicious, nor was he, as has been represented, savage and morose. His address was remarkably winning, and insured the friendship of all, with whom he came in contact. An employé of the Arch Street Theatre thus described him: "He was not a bad man and after all, was an innocent kind of fellow, who would not do a mean action, for the love of meanness. No son ever loved a mother more fondly, and he always spoke of her with the greatest admiration."

Booth had no pretension whatever to literary ability. His father was a man of universal information. Wilkes had an idea that he was clever on this point, but his orthography was bad, and his syntax worse. He was exceedingly fond of poetry and his pocket book was filled with scraps cut from the papers. His favorite piece was "Beautiful Snow," which he recited exquisitely, and never without tears. He liked to hear persons of reading and information converse, listened earnestly, and afterwards appropriated much that fell from their lips. His language was never ungrammatical nor vulgar, and he had great tact in avoiding matters, of which he was ignorant. When impressed with a subject he was eloquent and always attracted a little crowd.

Booth was exceedingly handsome. His hands and feet were in exact proportion to his size and height; his legs inclined to bow, in that respect resembling his father; his head and neck were very fine; a sculptor would not have asked a better model for the head of an Apollo; his nose was Roman and ample but not too large; his eyes were dark but full

of expression—those orbs that can meet in love or flame with passion; his glances were keen and he read character intuitively. In fact, he exercised a kind of magnetism over the person with whom he conversed, and no one could resist his fascination. This was the secret of his influence over Harold, Atzerott and Payne. A mass of curling, jetty hair crowned his square forehead and brows; such was his physique. A person who saw him after death, remarked that his features were still beautiful, but it was evident that he had undergone a great struggle, and was now at rest.

The death of the President was his "ruling passion," and Booth could scarcely have been considered sane on this point. He inherited a morbid tendency to derangement from his father.

Some pity may be felt for a man haunted with this idea, and who atoned for it by a sudden and violent death, preceded by the most agonizing tortures, as during his last ride he had not one moment's ease, cut off in the bloom of youth. The most severe moralist and bitter foe must drop a tear, even though he now serves only "to adorn a moral and to point a tale."

SOME INTERESTING REMINISCENCES

The Assassination of Lincoln Related—
Wilkes Booth's Career—Tragic Fates
of People Who Were With Lin-
coln the Night He Was Shot.

Correspondence of the Kansas City Journal.

NEW YORK, Feb. 16.—There can never have been in any one box in a theater in this world the same number of persons

DESTINED TO FATES SO AWFUL and unanticipated as at Washington on the night of April 14, 1865—the president and his wife, their two friends, Major Henry Rathbone and his step-sister, Miss Clara Harris; and later, the actor, John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln was assassinated that night in the very sight of the audience, almost on the stage, and in the midst of the rejoicings of the nation which he had helped to save. Mrs. Lincoln, poor woman, died insane a few years later, having defied her son and forced him to take steps to restrain her conduct, if not her person. Wilkes Booth, the son of one great actor and the brother of another, himself not without a touch of the dramatic quality, lamed himself as he leaped to the footlights, and after a marvelous flight and an almost theatrical pursuit, was brought to bay at night in a barn, surrounded by troops who set fire to the building, and when his comrades deserted him he yet remained in the flames, defiant to the last; till he was shot almost in the same part of the body in which he had wounded Lincoln. Then, like his heroic victim, he lingered a few hours and died.

WILKES BOOTH had never displayed any trait or indicated any sentiment that made it probable he would end his career with this appalling catastrophe. I had seen him several times under unusual circumstances. I was intimate as a young man with his more distinguished brother, Edwin, and thus had met the younger, who was bright and extremely handsome, as well as graceful and manly in ordinary behavior. He was born in Maryland, and when John Brown's raid occurred he shared the horror and indignation of most Southerners, as well as many Northerners at that time. The governor of Virginia called for a regiment of volunteers, and Wilkes was one of the first to respond; for there were apprehensions of an insurrection of the slaves as well as of other invasions from the North. But the panic passed away, and Wilkes returned to the stage.

In July, 1863, I was a Union officer and sent home from New Orleans badly wounded. The steamer that brought me arrived at New York just before the riots broke out, which so alarmed not only that city but the entire North. I was taken to the house of my relative, General Busted, an Irishman by birth, who had been a violent Democrat, but was nevertheless an ardent supporter of the war. His house was there-

MARKED OUT BY THE MOTORS

for destruction and he was notified to leave it, not only by the authorities, but by some among the mob who had once been his political friends and retained a touch of their former kindness. Accordingly the ladies of the family were removed to the New York hotel, but I was in such a physical condition that it was thoroughly unwise to transfer me unless it became absolutely indispensable. In a day or two, however, the riots were more rampant still, and Busted was again warned that it was unsafe for any inmate to remain in the house.

It was late in the summer, and I had no other near friend in town but Edwin Booth, who was living with his mother in the house of George F. Putnam, the publisher. I was very anxious not to go to an hotel, and Booth at once consented to receive me. On the 19th of July I was taken to his house. Wilkes Booth was there and stood in the door when I arrived. He was a strong, stalwart young fellow of 26, and himself helped to lift me out of the carriage, and afterwards carried me in his arms to an upper story; for my wound was in the foot, and I was unable to stand. For a week he nursed me tenderly, dressed my wounds, gave me my medicines, and, when I was strong enough, again he bore me in his arms daily up and down the stairs. All this while the riot was raging in the streets. Several times a day

WILKES WENT OUT to learn the situation, and when he returned reported it to us all; but he said not one word to indicate that he sympathized with the rioters, or with the cause that was their apparent instigation. On the contrary, he spoke with detestation of the burning of houses, shooting Union officers and

SUFFERING INOFFENSIVE NEGROES. I had a black servant, a lad of about 20 years, who had followed me from New Orleans, and Edwin Booth took him in, though at the risk of incurring the rage of the rioters. The whole family pitied the poor fellow, and when the murders at the negro asylum occurred, Wilkes proposed that Randall should be hidden in the cellar. He declared he would protect the boy at the hazard of his life if the mob came after him. But he was not discovered, and when the excitement abated and the streets were clear again, I was taken to the country and Randall was released from his concealment.

I saw Wilkes Booth once afterward. In the early winter of 1865, I was again in New York, this time recovering from a camp fever, and was driven daily to the house of Edwin Booth, where Wilkes was staying as before. At this period I was a staff officer of General Grant, and as Edwin was very loyal, indeed even ardent in his sentiment, he and I talked constantly of my desire to rejoin my chief, and of the prospects of the war. Again Wilkes Booth restrained in my presence any expressions of sympathy with the South; he said not one word to excite my suspicions, or even those of his family. Edwin indeed told me afterward that he had long and violent political discussions with his brother at this time. Wilkes declared his wish for the success of the rebellion so decidedly that

EDWIN FINALLY TOLD HIM he should go elsewhere to make such sentiments known; that he was not at liberty to express them in the house of a Union man. But even then, when possibly he was plotting something of the conspiracy which was only too successful in one horrible act, he was careful not to disclose or suggest anything that might awake suspicion or anxiety.

His whole conduct seemed to me, when I learned it afterward, and looked back at the man as I had known him, like the head behavior of an actor used to portraying conspiracies and mimic plots, and brooding upon such themes till

THIS BRAIN WAS TUNED

The entire story is theatrical in the last degree; the concealed meetings, the consultations, the disguises that preceded the end were precisely like the scenes in a play; while the climax resembled anything rather than the contrivance of a calm, clear-headed conspirator. To select a theater, the most public place in the world for the assassination of the nation's chief; to rush into a box and leap upon the stage after performing the act, would have occurred to no human being but an actor; and then, in the face of the audience to brandish his dagger and cry, "Sic semper tyrannis!" there was never a madder piece of effrontery, a more supremely gaudy, theatrical bit of display in the world. The subsequent story, the midnight ride in his agony, the concealment in one home after another, the final conflagration, and the climax, precisely like the culmination of a melodrama—the murderer shot in the way in which he had himself shot his victim—the portion of the terrible tragedy the unfortunate player had not planned. But all the rest he must have rehearsed in his own mind as he had rehearsed other tragedies for the stage. His imagination was doubtless crowded with recollections of the dramas that made up so much of his life, and the influence of which had penetrated and permeated his character.

There was besides a streak of madness in him, which, unhelped by himself, and sadly, terribly for the nation and its beloved chief, culminated in the way that the world knows.

There are

STORIES IN THE FAMILY of his strange behavior at various times; of his talking and muttering to himself; of his living at the solitary farm near Baltimore with no one but one old servant whom he frightened with his ravings, his brandishing of theatrical swords, his recitations and rehearsals of dramas and tragedies that she took to be real. I knew that house, for I had visited it years before with the elder brother, my friend. We found it half abandoned and unoccupied; the grounds overgrown with weeds, the rooms dark and mouldering; heaps of theatrical dresses and paraphernalia all around; and I can readily imagine how the brain of one of the Booths might have become disturbed in the midst of these suggestive garments and weapons and memories.

For Booth, the father, lived there a part of his moody, eccentric life; there the three brothers, Junius, Edwin, Wilkes, passed their boyhood, witnessing the strange freaks of their genius of a father; going with him to the theater, pressing him for the play, watching his performances, and coming home to see him in bursts of tenderness and passion like those of Lear, or brooding in a melancholy equal to that of the Dane. What effect such a childhood, and such a parentage, and such surroundings may have

Indiscreetly
Jan 20 1887

GEORGE W. WIGGINS, Washington, D. C.—I know John Wilkes Booth well. I lived in Washington during the war and saw much of him. I was passing the theater the night he assassinated President Lincoln with the lady who is now my wife and saw Booth enter the building. He spoke to us, and I said after he passed, "Ida, I believe John will go crazy yet." He neither looked nor acted naturally. Later on I heard of the tragedy and rushed to Secretary Stanton's. I was a clerk in the War Bureau and knew the Secretary. He had already heard of the awful crime. The Secretary ordered me to seize a horse and ride down to the National Hotel, near which were the cavalry headquarters, and warn them to let no one pass and to hunt for Booth. Pennsylvania avenue in those days was paved with cobblestones — "nigger-heads" they called them. I rode so fast that showers of sparks flew from the hoofs of my horse. I never witnessed so much excitement as on that evening and for days and weeks thereafter. All the talk you read about that the assassin was not captured is rotten rot. I saw Booth's body and was among those who identified him. Booth is as dead as Julius Caesar or Junbo.

AN UNPUBLISHED INCIDENT OF THE LINCOLN TRAGEDY.

AN INNOCENT MAN'S NARROW ESCAPE FROM CAPTURE AND HANGING—BY A ACCIDENT HE AVOIDED ARREST—IT WAS A MARYLAND GENTLEMEN.

On the night of the assassination of President Lincoln, and a short time before that tragedy took place, a horse and buggy were driven rapidly out of the alley back of Ford's Theater, turned down Tenth street to the avenue, and then disappeared, going easily toward the Capitol. A few moments later the greatest crime ever committed in America paralyzed for a moment the audience and held the whole country spell-bound with horror. Booth's leap to the stage, his dramatic speech, and remarkable escape passed like a dream before the audience. But then came the awakenings, and the assassin came fast upon the heels of the assassinated people. Who the vengeance of men would have involved in the plot, how large its ramifications, was unknown. Every clew was seized upon, every person over whom hung the slightest suspicion, was immediately arrested. A reign of terror followed among all the Southern sympathizers in the city and the country round. For the people in their anger were not very particular who suffered for the crime, provided the principals were caught and punished.

The disappearance of that horse and buggy a short time before the tragedy was soon brought to light and was eagerly seized upon as a clew that might lead to important results. Several companies of cavalry were immediately ordered to follow and overtake the buggy, to arrest the driver and bring him back to the old Capitol prison. They took up the trail at Pennsylvania avenue and followed it through the eastern part of the city until they came to the old Washington Pike, and then to Bladensburg, where they were told by the guard that a man in a buggy had passed a short time before. They put up their horses and drove the whole for a long distance, besides scouring the by-roads of all the surrounding country. But not a trace could they find of the man in the buggy; he had disappeared, and though every effort was made to unravel the disappearance, the Government authorities were never able to do so. Time passed.

The trials for the assassination were over, public interest died down and the incident was forgotten amid the stirring events that soon followed.

The Incident Explained.

It was my good fortune a short time ago to come across an explanation of this incident; in fact, it was explained to me by the man in the buggy. I had received a cordial invitation from an old gentleman who lived about 15 miles off, in the upper part of Prince George County, to join in a fox hunt which was to take place during Christmas week. It was to be the event of the season, as everybody had plenty of time at that season of the year. It was one of those delightful winter days which are so common in Maryland, just cold enough to keep the ground from being too soft, and yet warm enough to make riding pleasant without being overburdened with a heavy coat. The country was low and rolling, covered with heavy woods, which have taken the places of old, worn-out tobacco patches, and great dark brown fields, stretching away on either side, brightened occasionally by the light brown of the sedge grass, which waved and rustled in the breeze, almost like fields of ripened wheat. As I rode up to Mr. M.'s house I was greeted by the combined rush and chorus of his pack of foxhounds, whose noisy welcome takes the place of door bells in the homes of Southern Maryland. A noted Confederate scout once told me that, when he was scouting through this part of Maryland during the war, he always felt safe when he rode up to a house if he was greeted by foxhounds, as it was invariably a sign that the owner

fox-hunting gentry being of one persuasion. The house itself was one of those great square red brick houses, with a long, wide porch in front, so common in this part of Maryland, set in the usual cluster of old oaks and elms, with the negro quarters and the stables several hundred yards distant in the rear. It had been built in the latter part of the last century, when the planters made enormous fortunes from tobacco, which was ever so improvident the soil as to make it almost worthless in a great many instances.

I was met by Mr. M., a striking looking man, six feet in height, with a magnificent head and a long white beard.

He had been through many adventures when a young man and during the period of the war when he had many narrow escapes in forwarding dispatches and assisting scouts through the lines. Once, for instance, the Government was very anxious to capture a well-known scout, who was hiding in Baltimore. The scout escaped and made his way to Mr. M.'s house, where he lay hid for the night. Next day there happened to be a primary meeting of the Union troops, where a very large force of Union troops were stationed. The people generally went to the primaries in the morning and returned in the evening, after having a joint dinner. Mr. M., taking advantage of this, went to the primaries in the morning with the scout, took a drink with the Provost Marshal, passed out on the other side of the line, with some friends, returning to their homes in the lower part of the county, and reached Piscataway in safety, where the scout hid with some friends until he could cross the Potomac, which was no difficult, as there was a great deal of blockade-running done in that quiet little country town, overlooked on account of its insignificance.

The Story Told.

It is needless to say that I was welcomed in the true Maryland style. After dinner we were assembled around a large open fire, which sent a glow through the old hall. The fireplace was so large that, instead of cutting the cord-wood in half, as is usually the case, they used it just as it came from the woods, four feet long. The hall itself extended through the house from front to rear, and was the favorite loafing place of two or three old hounds, who had been famous in the hunting field in their youth. We had been talking about narrow escapes in the hunting field, when Mr. M. said:

"Have I ever told you how I came near being hung for the murder of Lincoln?"

A chorus of noes and a demand for the story brought the following account:

"On the day that Lincoln was murdered I had driven into town and put up my horse at the stables of Dr. —, an old friend of mine, immediately in the rear of Ford's Theater. It was rather late when I returned to get my horse, after attending to the business I was on. Indeed, I afterwards learned, it was a very short time before Lincoln was killed. As I drove out of the alley I noticed a horse standing behind the theater, no doubt the one on which Booth escaped. I drove down the avenue and finally succeeded in passing both the Washington pickets and those of Bladensburg, the last line of the defense of Washington. A short distance out of Bladensburg the country becomes heavily wooded, and continues so until you reach my place. Instead of running in a straight line the pike makes a kind of a curve, but there is a private road, a kind of cut-off, which saves a considerable distance to those who know of its existence. I had just turned into this road, and had gotten under the shadow of the trees, when I heard the clanking of the sabers of a body of cavalry coming rapidly down the pike. I stopped my horse to let them pass without hearing me, because cavalymen in those times very often fired and then cried: 'Halt!' The whole neighborhood was known to have very strong Southern feelings, and a dead rebel more or less did not amount to much. I had the same experience twice again, as I crossed by-roads, but each time I was fortunate enough to hear the cavalry coming, and so 'laid low,' as the darkies have it.

"I, of course, knew something was wrong exactly what I had no idea. There was no danger of Southern raids, as the sun of the South had just gone down behind the hills at Appomattox, and what had started this large body of Union cavalry riding through the country roads was more than I could account for, not dreaming for an instant that they were after me. I finally reached home without meeting any more

cavalry. Next morning, while I was at breakfast, a negro boy named Tom came to the door with a scared look on his face.

"What's the matter, Tom?"

"Mars Abe was shot last night down in Washington."

"Shot? Impossible!"

"Deed, though, it's true, Mars William."

"Just then I heard somebody ride rapidly up to the house, and looking out of the window I saw a neighbor of ours."

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

"No."

"Lincoln was killed last night by Booth at Ford's Theater."

"It flashed upon me in an instant, the meaning of all that cavalry swarming through the country the night before, and I came to the conclusion that I was the man they were after. You can depend upon it I kept pretty quiet. I did not care about feeling the noose around my neck like Mrs. Surritt, whom I knew well, or languishing on the Dry Tortugas like my friend Dr. Mudd. There was enough evidence against me to hang half a dozen men in the then state of public opinion. I was confirmed in this opinion a few years later when I happened to meet an officer of the United States Army, who told me incidentally that he had ridden through this part of the country on the night of Lincoln's murder, looking for one of the conspirators, who had escaped in a buggy, though they had ridden after him as far as Elk Ridge, some 30 miles from Washington."—Haddo Gordon in New York Evening Post.

The Assassination of Lincoln. (Gath in the Enquirer.)

John Wilkes Booth's crime, like most other things, had its model in a far remote past. When the Regent Moray was shot in Scotland by Bothwell Haugh, the assassin obtained from his uncle, an archbishop, the use of a house in a thoroughfare, cut a loophole, made preparations in a secret gallery, and after shooting the regent mounted a fleet horse behind the house, with which he distanced pursuit. This was 300 years, lacking five, before Booth's device of winning over the theater people and using their house for his plot.

Complete familiarity with the theater, his family's temple, marked all this crime. Not entirely alone, though rare among adventures, Booth had marked out the president of the United States. Gen. Bradley Johnson, the principal Maryland officer in the confederacy, told me that he had once designed to capture President Lincoln by using spies in Washington, and the son of Albert Sidney Johnston also told me that he introduced a Kentucky officer to Jefferson Davis, who outlined a plan to take the president from the midst of his capital and carry him over the same ferry by which Booth escaped. Booth alone had theatrical severity to keep close to his plot the alternate plan to slay the president, indeed, his stage occupation would have made it awkward for him to compromise upon anything less than death, as the class of tragedies he enacted ended in the dying in the public sight of the repudiated hero.

Here was a man, the heir of intemperance, animal instincts, theatricalism and hostility to tyrants, raised among companions who thought that blood was the best solution of a quarrel, and considered that courage was a purely physical manifestation. He regarded the land he was born in as belonging to its natives, though his father and grandfather had come there as foreigners. In the realities of life Booth had but little experience; the political conditions around him were hardly educational, and the stage conditions and examples, which for two or three generations had been his nutriment, were drawn from the first quarter of the 19th century, when such monsters as Pescara dominated the stage.—May 5, 1892.

ASSASSINATION OF LINCOLN.

**Sensational Charges to Be Made in a
Forthcoming Publication**
Special to The Republic.

PARKERSBURG, W. Va., Sept. 6.—General T. M. Harris of Illinois County, a member of the court-martial which investigated the death of Lincoln and condemned Mrs. Surratt, has just finished a history of the assassination of President Lincoln. The history was compiled from the stenographer's notes, which are in General Harris' possession. In the book General Harris boldly charges that Jefferson Davis and certain members of his Cabinet were interested in and encouraged the assassination of Lincoln. He fortifies the statement by a large amount of documentary evidence. His book will create a sensation.

Lincoln's Assassination.

George B. Corkhill, of Washington, writes to the New York Tribune regarding the assassination of President Lincoln. He says he has in his possession facts never before given to the public—the original confessions of Payne, the statements of Atzerodt and Harold, besides the personal details derived from persons then familiar with facts they were afraid to disclose. Speaking of John Matthews' statement concerning a package he received from Booth on the day of the assassination, Mr. Corkhill implies that the statement is inaccurate, and says:

"Mr. Matthews' story about Booth shooting his blooded mare and warning himself on that April day by her dying heat contains more romance than truth. That the murder of the president was not the original idea of the conspirators is probably true, but that they were ready for murder at any time the result fully demonstrates, and I am mistaken in the facts now in my possession if I shall not be able to convince every unprejudiced reader that the evidence, fully developed by most careful examination, shows that the judicial punishment of these conspirators, one or all without exception, was fully justified. I have as high a regard for the personal feelings of the living relatives of John Wilkes Booth as any one else, but I cannot think that a regard for them should prevent a complete and accurate history of this fearful crime being written, even if it should revive unpleasant subjects, and I have no other interest than to write a line of history."—October 2, 1879.

Lincoln's Assassination.

To The Star: How many persons were arrested for the assassination of President Lincoln? Who were convicted? Who were sentenced to death? Who were executed? What lawyers defended them? Where were they tried? Were any of the cases appealed to the supreme court?

T. V. O., Pawnee, Ok.

Nine persons were arrested for the assassination of Lincoln—Samuel Arnold, George A. Atzerodt, David E. Herold, Samuel T. Mudd, Michael O'Laughlin, Edward Spangler, Lewis Payne, John H. Surratt, Jr., and Mary E. Surratt. Of these, all were convicted with the exception of John H. Surratt, who escaped. Atzerodt, Herold, Payne and Mrs. Surratt were sentenced to death, and executed July 7, 1865. Walter S. Cox, Doster, Frederick A. Alken, John W. Clappitt, Thomas Ewing, Jr., and Reverdy Johnson defended them. All were tried in Washington, D. C. As a last desperate resort, application was made for a writ of habeas corpus for Mrs. Surratt, which was granted by Judge Wylie of the Supreme Court of the District and made returnable at 10 o'clock. At 11:30 o'clock, Hancock, accompanied by the Attorney General, appeared before Judge Wylie, and, by order of the President, declined to obey the writ on the ground that it was suspended.

LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION.

New and Interesting Facts Disclosed
by James R. Ford.

Special to The Republic.

Baltimore, Md., May 21.—James R. Ford, brother of the late John T. Ford, received a letter yesterday from a gentleman in New York, who is writing a history of the assassination of President Lincoln in Washington 30 years ago. It was James R. Ford who sent the theater tickets to President Lincoln on the morning of the assassination and called on Mayor Richard Wallace to quell the riot in the theater after John Wilkes Booth fired the fatal shot. Mr. Ford was business manager of the theater. He relates these additional facts regarding the assassination of Lincoln:

About 9 o'clock in the morning of the day of the assassination Mr. Lincoln's messenger came to the theater, as was his almost weekly custom, and asked Mr. Ford for the tickets for Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln and General Grant. About 10 o'clock Mr. Ford told a theater attache to write notices for the afternoon papers announcing that the President and party would be at the theater that night.

About 11 o'clock John Wilkes Booth, in a black coat and high silk hat and carrying a gold-headed cane, was seen leisurely approaching the theater for his morning mail. Harry Ford, addressing James R. Ford, remarked: "Here comes the handsomest man in Washington." Booth opened a stack of letters, many of which were from female admirers. Harry Ford then announced the news of Lee's surrender, to Booth, who replied: "He should never have given up that sword."

Harry Ford then began to twit him and said that Lee, handcuffed, would be in one of the boxes of the theater that night, and Lincoln and Grant in the opposite box. James Ford said this was the first intimation Booth had that the President would be at the theater that night. Following the conversation at the theater James Ford and Booth walked out together. Mr. Ford bound to the Treasury Department to get flags to decorate the President's box. Booth urged him to go off and have a drink, but Mr. Ford left him and went on his mission. This was the last he saw of Booth.

Wilkes's Booth

Sirs:

You give in your issue of Dec. 28, p. 10, "Mummy," over a column on the authenticity of a mummy of the man who assassinated Lincoln. My understanding of this incident in history somewhat differs from the popular version.

Quote: "John Wilkes, Lord Mayor of London, had just jumped his bail and had hurriedly left that city for the States, arriving some days ahead of his inevitable bad news. Going immediately to Washington, the first thing he noticed was that his old friend Laura Keane was playing in *Our American Cousin* and on seeking to obtain a seat for that night's performance, he was informed that the only thing available was a box, or as it was called then, a booth. Feeling flush and, as usual, drunk, he bought it; but when, after a few more drinks in Miss Keane's dressing room before the show, he went to take his seat out front, he found that the dolt in the box office—who later became James McNeill Whistler—had given his box, or booth, to President Abraham Lincoln and his party, who were already in it and couldn't, of course, be moved. As there wasn't a seat left in the house, Whistler took Wilkes around the corner to a place on F Street, and they were heard of no more. When, during the second act, one of Wilkes's enemies sneaked into the box and shot Lincoln by mistake, the news was erroneously flashed that the President had been shot by John Wilkes Booth instead of in John Wilkes's booth. This was rather hard on the actor of that name who was living miles away in an old barn, hard at work cutting all the other parts down for his next performance of *Richard III*, for a few days later

he was surrounded and an attempt was made to set him on fire; but it was raining and he escaped down a drain, turning up—clean shaven—20 years later as a well-known Mormon."

TIME to my experience has been unusually accurate and I would now like to know which of these versions is correct; the popular one or the above quoted one. . . .

N. L. WISSER

Shinnston, W. Va.

John Wilkes (1727-97), Lord Mayor of London stormed through Britain's politics, libeled his King, fled to France, returned to sit in Parliament. James Abbott McNeill Whistler sailed for England in 1854, never to return to the U. S.—Ed.

TIME



WILKES BOOTH'S LAST BURIAL.

Lincoln's Assassin Rests in the Baltimore Family Plot.

SOME TALES OF HIS LIFE.

JOHN MARION BARRON is one of the few surviving actors of the old school. He was the intimate associate of Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, and of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. In speaking of the assassin the other day Mr. Barron gave some alleged facts concerning the disposition of his body that contradicts the statements of several men concerned in Booth's capture.

"Mr. Barron, you knew Wilkes Booth well?" I asked.

The answer came first in two apt quotations from Shakespeare:

"Your noble son is mad."

Mad call I it; for to define true madness

What is it, but to be nothing else but mad?

Had I but died an hour before this chance

I had lived a blessed time.

"John Wilkes Booth I did know well, very well. Calling to mind the last time I saw my old friend and comrade, that madman, John Wilkes Booth, I realized that if he had died a month before that cruel act of April 14, 1865, his name would have been associated with all the leading stars of a most brilliant galaxy of actors than whom none more famous ever lived and dazzled America by their greatness. John Wilkes Booth gave promise of being the greatest of all those men of genius, even greater than his wonderful brother, Edwin. He would have been canonized in American dramatic history. All the faults of an erratic nature would have been lost in the blaze of glory created by his wonderful and magnetic genius.

"There is no palliation in the slightest degree for the awful crime he committed. That he was mad those who best knew him believe, for his life was so gentle, and the harmonious mysteries of his disposition were at variance with anything that smacked of cruelty or oppression. Booth and I were companions, brothers in art, roomed together, and he would have been the last man one would have thought capable of so heinous a crime. We all know that 'a strain of insanity' was in the Booth family. As Edwin once said to me: 'Many times my father has been accused of drunkenness when failing to appear, when in reality was an irresponsible being.'

"A kinder heart, a more generous man, never lived than John Wilkes Booth. Early in his theatrical career he was recognized as the bright particular star of the great Booth family. But like all geniuses, he was as modest as a child, and disliked anything pertaining to sublimeness. He was a conscientious stock actor to begin with, a close student, and an Apollo in form, grace, and ease of carriage. He had a will of his own, and nothing could change him when once he decided upon a thing. He would forfeit a season's engagement rather than yield one iota of what he had determined upon.

"Once at the Marshall Theater, Richmond, Va., we were in the stock company together. Edwin was the star and 'Much Ado About Nothing' the play. Edwin was the Benedict, John Wilkes the Don Pedro, I the Claudio. We rehearsed the play—all perfect. John and I went to our hotel and arranged our wardrobes. About 3 o'clock John turned suddenly to me and said: 'Barron, you play Don Pedro tonight.' 'I do not; I play Claudio as I rehearsed.' I replied.

"Well, you go and tell Phil' (Stage Manager L. B. Phillips) 'that I am going to Petersburg, and you will play Don Pedro and he can do Claudio.' Out of the door he went, and we did not see him for three days.

"Such was his erratic nature. Upon his return he was profuse in his apologies and could not tell what impelled him to leave the city. Once a young utility man was cast for a part that required a handsome dress, which the poor fellow had not. John heard him bewailing his fate at having a good part and no dress except a common one. After rehearsal John opened his trunk and said: 'Take the best and do your best.'

"Many such acts of generosity, many acts of noble charity, did this misguided madman—misguided, I mean, later on—for before 'grim-visaged war' came upon the scene this man was as gentle as a woman.

"The season of 1860-'61 was a stirring one in the South. At last the time came when brother was against brother and father against son. No man could tell what change an hour might bring. All through this awful clamor we kept the even tenor of our way. Discussions were not permitted in the theater in Richmond. Nearly every member of the company was a Southerner, but no word escaped his lip—no act betrayed what he must have felt. As for the man who was to thrill the world later with the assassination of Lincoln, the most dastardly act in all history, except the crucifixion of Christ, he was as calm as a child. Even the stirring events of every day did not ruffle his child-like demeanor. And so we artists followed our calling

through all the turmoil of the impending crisis.

"At last that fateful 12th of April came. 'Sumter has been fired upon!' That day after Sumter's flag was lowered John and I walked from the hotel to the theater. I asked him what he intended to do. 'I am going North as fast as steam will carry me,' and he left Richmond before I did.

"That company never assembled again. John Booth began his starring tour, and I was commissioned as an engineer in the United States navy and remained in service until the dawn of Appomattox.

"I did not see John Booth again until March, 1865, and that meeting I shall never forget. The Metropolitan Hotel on Broadway was then the Richelieu—the 'House of Lords'—for the actors. I had just arrived in New York in charge of a blockade runner—the Gordon—that took Mason and Slidell from Charleston to Havana.

"Hurrying up Broadway I saw John Wilkes Booth standing with his hands behind him leaning against the wall of the hotel, enveloped in his overcoat, trimmed with astrakhan. I acted as one hunted, for four years—but O! the change in him!

"I found my old friend a different man from the companion of four years before. His eyes were wild and furtive, he could not command himself. He acted as one hunted, for first up and then down the street he would look most ardently. At last he said: 'John, I want to have a talk with you. I am a little fagged out now, but I will be all right in a day or two. And if you will meet me at the hotel we will go over the old days.'

"I promised and left him, starting up Broadway. I had not gone twenty feet when he called me back. I returned and inadvertently opened my overcoat. He saw my navy uniform. I saw a change come over that wonderful face, and in those classic features. All at once it flashed across his mind that I was an officer of the government and it was not safe to repose any traitorous schemes in me. With all the skill of the artist he was he collected himself and said:

"I think I will not remain in New York, so I will not hold you to our engagement." After a little while I left him never to see him alive again. That he wished to impart that awful conspiracy I am fully convinced, for to the next intimate friend that came along he told what was in his heart and mind. That there was murder in the original conspiracy I do not believe. Of course I do not know this, but am judging from my knowledge of the 'milk of human kindness' in that man's heart as I knew him. I have often regretted that act of opening my coat which displayed my uniform, and as often thought what I would have done had John Wilkes Booth imparted the details of that conspiracy.

"Had it not rained on the night before Waterloo the map of Europe would have been different. Had I not shown that uniform I might have, it has often occurred to me, averted the disaster of the century.

"While the passions of men were at white heat and the world appalled at the enormity of the crime, none could ascribe a cause.

"The 'sic semper tyrannis' of Booth did not apply as it might have done when Caesar was assassinated. Abraham Lincoln was one of the most humane men of history. Nothing so became him as his mild humility. Love of country was uppermost in his mind, and the fervent wish that both sections should again become brothers was the chief aim of his life, and so the theory that Booth thought this pure patriot a tyrant falls to the ground, for Booth knew his character as well as any one. He knew that the only vote Edwin Booth ever cast was for Abraham Lincoln. Not treason was it, but madness!

"What a noble mind was here overthrown! It is known that for years the greatest secrecy was maintained by the government as to the place of burial of Booth. At last the authorities gave his remains to his family and they rest in Greenmount Cemetery, in the same lot that contains the ashes of his great father and other members of this gifted family. When Booth's remains were brought to Baltimore they were in charge of an undertaker on Fayette street, opposite the stage door of the Holliday Street Theater. John T. Ford, Charles B. Bishop, and I were the only professional people there. There was no mistaking that form. The remains were wonderfully well preserved. Edwin Booth told me long after the burial that the fact that John was at rest in the same lot with his father and family was a source of great comfort to his mother, who ever felt most grateful to the government, for—

"After life's awful fever

He sleeps well.

PHRENTISS INGHAM.

Unwritten History About Incidents That Led Up to the Tragedy—Booth's Skeleton Now in the War Department's Possession.—An Official Secret.

"Here comes the handsomest man in the United States."

Young Harry Ford, who made the remark, was standing on the sidewalk in front of his father's theater, in Tenth street, in Washington. The date was April 14, 1865.

The man of whom he spoke, Wilkes Booth, was approaching from the sidewalk of E street. He was young—only 26 years of age—and faultlessly dressed. It was not without good reason that Ford spoke of him in such terms of admiration; beyond question he was one of the handsomest men of his day.

It was just about noon, and Booth was coming to the theater, as he did every day, to get his mail. An actor by profession, he was for the time being unemployed, but found it convenient to have his letters addressed to Ford's.

When he reached the theater he passed a pleasant word with Harry, asking him if there was anything new. Harry could not find out anything in particular, except that President Lincoln and Mrs. Lincoln were coming to see the show that night. A messenger had arrived only a few minutes earlier with a request that a box be reserved for the White House party. They were to have the upper box on the right of the stage.

The colloquy between the two young men lasted only a minute or two. Then Booth went into the theater, got his letters, came out, stepped down on the steps, read his mail, and remained there for a little while, apparently thinking. Finally he rose to his feet and walked down the street again, in the direction from which he had come.

Nobody will ever know what were the thoughts that passed through the mind of the actor as he sat there on the steps after putting his letters in his pocket. But there seems to be good reason to believe that during those moments the plan to assassinate the president was first formed. Here was a tempting opportunity to avenge at one blow the fancied wrongs of the south, and an insane impulse bade him seize it.

A conspiracy against Mr. Lincoln, in which Booth, Payne, Atzerott, and a number of others were engaged, had already been on foot for quite a while. Those in the plot had met repeatedly, for the purpose of talking it over, at the Kirkwood House, Washington, (where the Raleigh Hotel now stands) and other places. But the plan in view was not to kill the president. He was to be kidnapped, carried south to Richmond, and there kept as a hostage, in order to compel the Federal government to come to terms, especially with regard to an exchange of prisoners.

It is not unlikely that this extraordinary project, about which there was more than a dash of the theatrical, originated in the imaginative brain of Booth himself. But circumstances did not work out favorably. There was one occasion on which it might possibly have been carried through—when, as had been announced, Mr. Lincoln was going to be present at an entertainment at the soldiers' home, just outside of Washington. An attempt was to be made to seize him, either on the way thither or coming back. But, at the last moment, important business intervened, and Secretary Chase was sent instead.

This failure, when the scheme seemed actually on the verge of execution, so disheartened the plotters that most of them backed out, abandoning the conspiracy. Such, in fact, was the situation that had arrived on the fatal morning of April 14, when Wilkes Booth came to Ford's theater to get his mail, and learned, incidentally, that the president was to see the play—"Our American Cousin," with Laura Keane—this evening.

It was about half an hour after noon when the young actor, getting up from the steps of the theater on Tenth street, flicked a few particles of dust from his irreproachable pantaloons, and walked away. Nobody knows what he did during the afternoon; but early in the evening he met Payne and Atzerott at the Clarendon hotel, on the southwest corner of Ninth and F streets—a site now occupied by a huge granite office building. By this time he had fully made up his mind to kill Mr. Lincoln, and he unfolded it to his fellow conspirators. Payne agreed to undertake the part of the scheme allotted to him, which was to murder Mr. Seward, the secretary of state—a project which was afterward carried out almost with success. Atzerott, however, refused to have anything to do with the business. He said that he had been perfectly willing to try to kidnap the president, but he was now the shedding blood. At the same time he made no attempt to interfere, and, as if to wash his hands of the whole affair, immediately left the city by train.

What followed is a matter of familiar history. Booth went out the theater about 10 o'clock in the evening, mounted to the gallery, and, watching for a favorable opportunity, stole along the passageway that gave entrance to the president's box. In those days the chief magistrat of the nation was not guarded by detectives, as is now the case, and it was easy for the assassin to enter the box from the rear and shoot Mr. Lincoln in the back of the head.

Of course there was tremendous excitement and confusion, during which the assassin leaped over the rail of the box to the stage. Catching his foot in the flag that draped the box, he fell upon the stage in such a manner as to break his ankle. Then, addressing to the audience the words, "Sic semper tyranni!" with a theatrical gesture, he turned and fled.

Though the play at the moment was in the midst of its performance, nobody had the presence of mind to try to stop him; and he succeeded in reaching the alley alongside the theater and mounting his horse, which he had left there in charge of a boy. Before the hue and cry was fairly on foot he was well on his way toward Surrattsville (now Clinton), Md., crossing the eastern branch of the Potomac by the navy yard bridge.

The story of the man-hunt that followed has been too often told to be worth retelling here. Riding southward, Booth paused at the house of a physician, Dr. Mudd, about 36 miles from Washington, to have his ankle set. Meanwhile, on the road to Surrattsville, he was joined by a young man named Herold—a half-witted fellow, who had been a sort of hanger-on at Ford's theater, and was, by nature, a great admirer of Booth. He was afterward hanged, together with Payne, Atzerott, and Mrs. Surratt, but persons who to-day are best acquainted with the details of the assassination are of the opinion that he was innocent of complicity in the affair.

Although several troops were scouring the country for the two sides of the Potomac, in pursuit of the assassin, a number of days elapsed before he was finally run down, on a farm not far from the Rappahannock River. The barn in which he had taken refuge was set on fire, and after Herold had come out and surrendered himself, Booth who declared his intention to fight to the last, was shot, through a crack in the building, by a sergeant named Boston Corbett.

Corbett received a great deal of applause for this act, for which he claimed and received part of the reward

which had been offered for Booth dead or alive. As a matter of fact, however, it was very unfortunate that the matter should have terminated in such a way. If Booth had been captured, instead of being killed, the lives of two persons, afterward hanged, though almost undoubtedly innocent, might have been saved through his testimony.

There never was adequate evidence to show that young Herold was implicated in the conspiracy or concerned in the crime. Of Mrs. Surratt the same thing might be said. But public sentiment was passionately inflamed, as was naturally under the circumstances, and demanded victims. Consequently, Mrs. Surratt and the half-witted youth perished on the scaffold with Payne and Atzerott.

The bullet fired by Boston Corbett struck Booth in the neck, severed the spinal cord, and killed him instantly. His body was put aboard a little steamer and carried up the Potomac to the Washington navy yard, where it was transferred to the monitor, Montauk at night, and became of it from that time on is more or less of a mystery. The understanding is that it was removed from the monitor and buried under the old penitentiary at the Washington Arsenal. If official records on the subject are surprisingly incomplete, and even to this day the final disposition of the assassin's remains is a carefully kept secret, known only to a very few persons.

A story has been published to the effect that Booth's body, about four years after his burial in the manner described, was dug up and transferred by friends to a cemetery in Baltimore. There is no slightest truth in such statements. However, the fact being that the skeleton, strung together with wires, is still preserved and in the possession of the government, though hidden from public view. The war department could tell where it now is, if it chose.

The body never underwent any proper identification, and there are not a few persons to-day who actually believe that it was not Wilkes Booth who was shot to death in the barn, but some other man. Published reports in the newspapers have even gone so far as to identify one individual or another as the assassin, who, according to the theory thus promulgated, made his escape and hid for many years, under an assumed name, in this or that part of the country. There is no reasonable doubt, however, that such notions are utterly without basis in fact.

Mr. Lincoln died at 7:20 o'clock in the morning. He was shot, in a small brick house directly opposite Ford's theater, to which he was carried. This house is now a Lincoln museum, filled with memorials of the martyr president. It includes a milk hat which he wore on the fatal night, the chair in which he sat when the bullet was fired, a lock of his hair, the cradle in which he was rocked as an infant, a wreath from his coffin, a rail of his prison, and many other great variety of other such objects.

Most interesting of all are photographs of the execution of Payne, Atzerott, Herold, and Mrs. Surratt, in the yard of the penitentiary. In the series was the reading of the death warrant, while friendly persons shelter Mrs. Surratt from the sun with umbrellas—the day being frightfully hot. In the second photograph the series shows the hanging of black caps on the doomed prisoners, and in the third the latter are seen swimming from the wallows, while sol-

deaths rained along the walls of the prison yard, looking upon the dismal spectacle—the final condition of a wretched and horrifying tragedy.

Lincoln's Death

Great Emancipator Was
Assassinated Fifty-Four
Years Ago

4/12/1915

Fifty-four years ago next Tuesday, with the country in much the same post-war condition that it is at present, the death of Abraham Lincoln brought to the nation perhaps the greatest and saddest tragedy in its history.

John Wilkes Booth—who was born on a farm in Hartford county, Md., near Baltimore, in 1839, and who had made his debut on the stage as Richmond in "Richard III" at the St. Charles theater, Baltimore—shot President Lincoln at Ford's theater, Washington, D. C., at 10:20 o'clock, on Friday evening, April 14, 1865. The President was carried from the theater across the street to the house of William Petersen, and he passed away there at 7:22 o'clock the following morning, April 15, 1865. The Ford theater and the house where Lincoln died are in the block just north of The National Republican building, on the same street.

Booth had entered the theater just as the third act of "Our American Cousin" had commenced, the star of the evening being Miss Laura Keane. Booth escaped, but was finally tracked to a barn belonging to a man named Garratt, near the town of Bowling Green, Caroline county, Va. His pursuers were twenty-eight men of the Sixteenth New York cavalry, under Lieut. Col. Everton J. Conger of Ohio. After Booth had refused to surrender, the barn was set on fire by Colonel Conger, who lighted a rope of straw and thrust it inside the barn on top of a little pile of hay in a corner.

Although Booth knew that either death or surrender was inevitable, he obstinately refused to come out of the barn, and, leaning upon a crutch—for his leg had been injured while jumping from the President's box to the stage of the theater—was in the act of taking aim at one of the pursuing soldiers, who were stationed so as to command every point of observation, when Lieutenant Dougherty, seeing Booth's move, ordered Sergt. Boston Corbett to fire on Booth, which he did with telling effect.



9

Youngstown Ohio

Mar 2nd 1836

LINCOLN LIFE

REC'D MAR 4 1931

INSW

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Sir:

On February 14th I had the pleasure of addressing a group of your life insurance salesmen and ladies at a conference here under the direction of J. M. Jones your agent in Youngstown. My subject was the "Death of Lincoln." After my speech, in conversation with Mr. Jones, he told me of the deep interest of your company in any data related to Lincoln and your wonderful collection of Lincoln relics. I have spent a lifetime of research in one phase of Lincoln's life of which little is known or written about and which when related to people always seems to interest them. That subject is his death and the facts surrounding it. I not only have a library of rare books on the subject but am personally acquainted with people who were involved in some way with this historic event. On a Sunday in May last year my good friend W. J. Ferguson passed away just one week before we were to have had dinner together and spent another day at Tudor Hall the home of the Booth family outside of Baltimore. Mr. Ferguson was the last

2

surviving member of that notable company who played "Our American Cousin" in Fords Theater on that fatal night. He too was the only person in the whole theater who actually saw John Wilkes Booth shoot Lincoln. This is borne out by the government record. Mr Ferguson is the author of that rare book "I Saw Booth Shoot Lincoln". I had the honor of supplying some data for the book and it is acknowledged in my autographed copy. I have written a broadcast of the memorable events which are as authentic as it is possible to make them. This writing has been done with the cooperation of Warren Wade dramatic director of station W.T.A.M. the U.B.C. station in Cleveland and the only thing necessary now is to get the right sponsor. There are many firms ready and willing to sponsor this program but ethics will not permit it. One of the few firms who could do it would be yours with Lincolns name and your interest in his life. It is a program that will not allow a large amount of advertising

during its playing because it would spoil the theme. I thought that your name as sponsor would give you a lot of practical advertising and at the same time would not give the impression that Lincolns name was being used to further the sale of a product such as foodstuffs. I would like very much to have you write to Warren Wade Dramatic Director, National Broadcasting Co, 1367 East Sixth Street Cleveland Ohio who can give you his idea of the appeal of such a broadcast. By the way this is not a family affair Mr Wade is no relation of mine and was unknown to me a month ago. He seems very enthusiastic about the broadcast. If you could arrange it I would be glad to meet you as a representative in Cleveland at the W.T.A.M. Studios and we could go into the matter fully. To see the material itself would be better than to try and explain it in a letter. All that is necessary is to let me know

the time and day you would like to hold
the conference with Mr Wade and I and
it will be arranged. Further you can
write to your Mr Jones here and he
can tell you the interest my speech created.
Please don't get the impression this is an
idle thing at Lincoln's death but the
result of years of scientific research.

Sincerely yours

Bryon Wade

3612 Hillman St

Youngs town

Ohio.

Boyle

March 5, 1931

Mr. Byron Wade
3612 Hillman Street
Youngstown, Ohio

My dear Mr. Wade:

Your letter directed to Mr. Hall, President of the Company, has been referred to this Department.

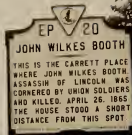
On several instances we have had up the matter of broadcasting different episodes of Lincoln's life but I am positive that we would not be ready to take on such a program as you suggest.

If at any time we feel that your researches in this field could find a place in our program, we will be very glad to correspond with you.

Respectfully yours,

LAW:VL

Director,
Lincoln Historical Research Foundation.



EP 20
JOHN WILKES BOOTH

THIS IS THE CARRETT PLACE
WHERE JOHN WILKES BOOTH,
ASSASSIN OF LINCOLN WAS
CORNERED BY UNION SOLDIERS
AND KILLED, APRIL 26, 1865.
THE HOUSE STOOD A SHORT
DISTANCE FROM THIS SPOT

C
O
P
Y

William B. Ruggles
3548 Rosedale
Dallas, Texas 75205

July 14, 1970

Henry B. Bass
1901 Comanche Trail
Enid, Oklahoma 73701

Dear Mr. Bass:

First, let me express sincere gratitude for putting me on the list for your monthly letter. I found your Foray Into Civil War Days extremely interesting. And thanks for the xerox copy of my Uncle Mortimer's narrative of his encounter with Booth. I have typed copies of this, his cousin Bainbridge's and Doherty's but as I did the typing it is nothing to be proud of, and when I obtained the first two narratives back in the Thirties, I don't think xerox existed. My daughter in New Orleans, who is delving into history will be glad to have the copy you sent.

My Uncle Mortimer ("Tippecanoe") Ruggles died in, I think, 1902 or 1903. For a good many years he had traveled for (in those days a "drummer") for Arnold-Constable of New York, where he lived. He had visited us in my hometown of Austin twice before 1900 (I was born in 1891) and we visited him and his family (wife and son, both now deceased) in New York City in 1901.

I knew he had written an account of the meeting with Booth, but not where it had been published. Some time in the Thirties, I reviewed an account of Custer's death in the Little Big Horn Battle for the Dallas News. A Dallas man called on me in my editorial office in The News, to ask if I had ever read General Graham's account of the campaign. I had not, so he lent me a bound volume of Old Century Magazine for 1889 in which Graham's narrative appeared. After reading it, I went through the volume to see what was being printed in 1889 and, of all things! I found in one issue the Ruggles-Bainbridge, Doherty accounts of their meeting with Booth. I copied the first two, was not interested in Doherty and then years later began to regret my omission. Then, about 10 years ago, I made a talk on the three Confederates to the Dallas Philological Society of which a fellow member is a Dallas school teacher, W. R. Conger. I mentioned the above facts. Conger asked me if I still wanted the Doherty narrative and when I said I did, he said he would make me a copy as he had one - he was a relative of Conger who commanded the cavalry unit to which Doherty belonged in the pursuit of the assassin. What coincidences!

I wonder if your daughter's book in which you found the narrative was a Century Magazine. (I think I am right about the Century, it could have been Scribners'.) I did not know the narrative had ever been published elsewhere.

I have always been convinced that the execution of Mrs. Surratt was judicial murder. The original conspiracy to kidnap Lincoln was plotted in her house with her son in it, but she was not in this. The assassination as Booth said to the three Confederates was a spur of the moment idea of himself and Payne on reading in the morning paper that Lincoln and Grant would be guests

at Ford Theatre that night. If Grant had been there, Booth said cheerfully, he would have killed him too.

It might interest you to know that my grandfather, Daniel Ruggles, who went to West Point from Massachusetts, was one of the 26 Yankees who were Generals in the Confederate Army. Two of his sons, Mortimer and the eldest, Edward, served in the CSA Army, my father, born in 1853, was too young. Uncle Tip, as we called Mortimer, had expected to surrender with Mosby, went with Mosby to arrange the surrender, learned there of the assassination, saw the black mood of the Yankee soldiers, decided that his Northern origin might make his surrender a risk, so planned to join Johnston, still fighting in Georgia. Bainbridge was his cousin so he went along. Jett did surrender, got his parole, rejoined the other two enroute to the home of all three in Fredericksburg. Hence, the accidental meeting with Booth. All three were captured, told their story, were never put on the stand during the trial of Herold, Payne, Mrs. Surratt, et al. This has always made me think Stanton did not want the truth told.

I should add another coincidence. Sometime between 1927 and 1937 while I was living on San Carlos Street in University Park, a family moved in across the street. Seeing the male waiting for a bus, I picked him up in my car. We introduced ourselves. His name was Jett. I asked if he was a relative of William Jett of the Booth meeting. He was. More than six decades after 1865, and several thousand miles from Fredericksburg, here were relatives of two of the three Confederates living across the street from each other, a Dallas County municipality!

I am afraid I have run along at great length.

Thanks again for both of your letters.

Sincerely,

William B. Ruggles

C
O
P
Y

Scholar: Booth a warm-hearted man

by Sandy Hoefler

John Wilkes Booth was intelligent, handsome and warm-hearted, a scholar said Friday.

But he also had deep-rooted personal problems that he may have hoped to escape by killing Abraham Lincoln, said history professor Constance Head of Western Carolina University.

Head and other experts spoke at the Ninth Annual Abraham Lincoln Symposium at the Old State Capitol Friday afternoon.

Booth was not the "insane, drunken actor" that history has made him out to be, Head said.

"He was a refined, intelligent, warm-hearted person," she said. "He was handsome, popular and the best-paid star of the American stage. Ladies thrilled at him."

A variety of incidents in Booth's life

led up to his killing Lincoln, she said.

Booth was the youngest son in a family of actors. By 1863, when he was only 24, Booth had made more than \$20,000 with his stage career. But he was afflicted with an illness that caused hoarseness in his voice, and he had to cancel several acting engagements during the next year.

Booth also had promised to marry a senator's daughter, but since his illness required him to postpone his acting career for almost a year, Booth had little money left to support her. In addition, Booth had made several investments in oil wells that did not produce the fortunes he'd hoped for.

"His own world was falling apart. Beneath his facade, he was miserable," Head said.

And, Booth was obsessed with a death wish. It seemed attractive to him to become a "Southern hero," then die for

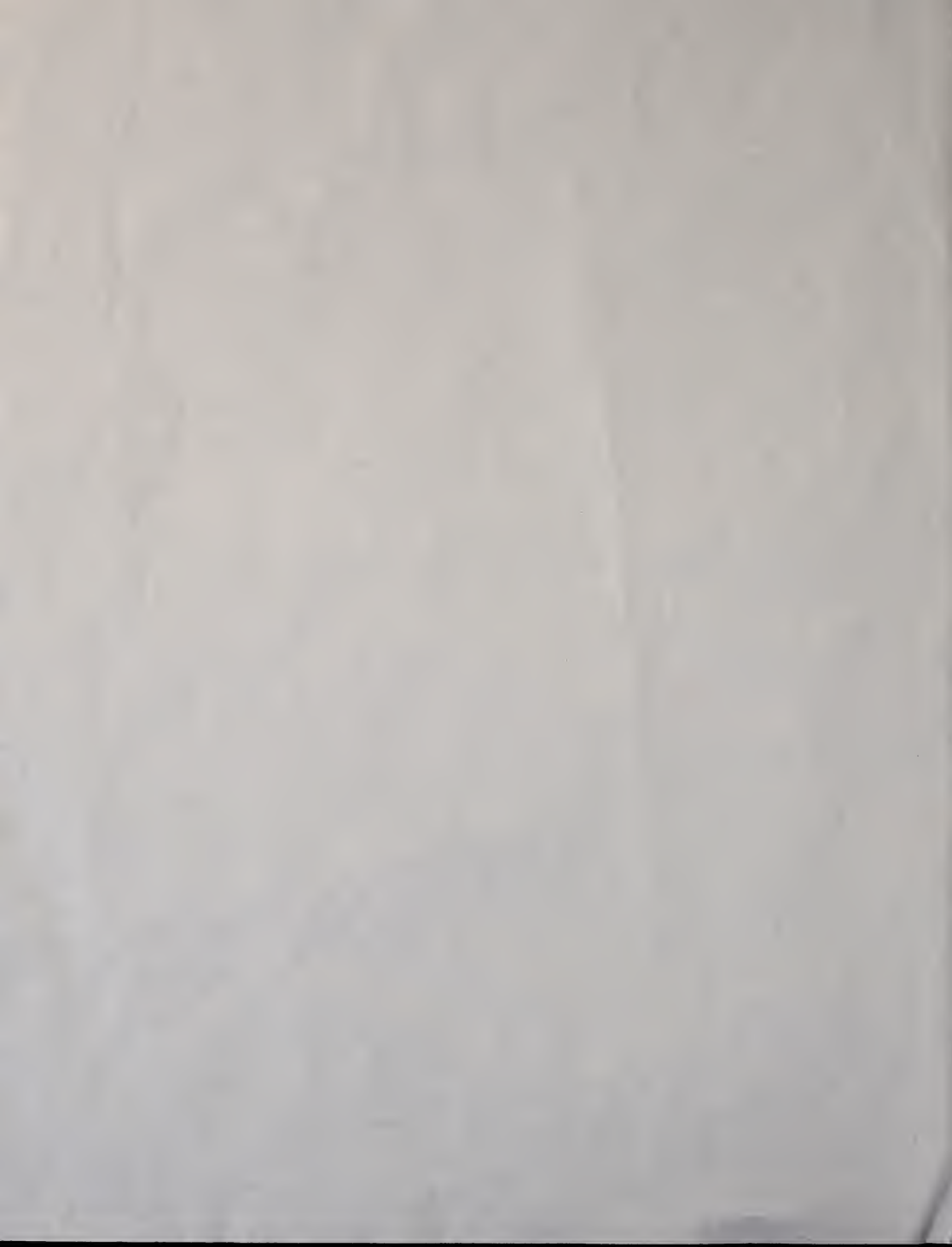
his country, Head said.

Another scholar, however, maintained Booth may very well have been part of a wider conspiracy, plotted by the South to overturn the victorious Union government.

Thomas Turner, history professor at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts, said testimony in the trials of the eight conspirators who worked with Booth shows a Confederate plot was brewing. Clergy at the time also reinforced the feeling that the South had something to do with Lincoln's death.

Of the eight charged with the conspiracy, four men and one woman were hanged. It was the first time in history that the U.S. Government executed a woman. The rest were sent to prison.

Also joining the observance was Richard Gutman, co-author of books on Booth and Lincoln, who presented a slide show detailing the life of Booth.



OBITUARY NOTES.

1896

Medina, N. Y., Dec. 20.—John Ryan, the oldest resident of Medina, is dead, aged ninety-six years. He was always prominently identified with the Erie Canal, having had charge of the enlarging of one section. He was formerly a power in politics.

Baltimore, Dec. 20 (Special).—Franklin Robey, who aided John Wilkes Booth and his companion, Herold, to find a hiding place in Charles County after the assassination of President Lincoln, died yesterday at his home in that county. He was sixty-seven years old, and had always been reticent about the part he took in the escape of the assassin. It was Robey who piloted Booth from the home of the late Colonel Samuel Cox, in Charles County, to the pine woods near where the town of Bel Air now stands, and later directed Thomas Jones to the spot. It was then that Jones took charge of the fugitives and subsequently piloted them to the Potomac River, where they embarked for the Virginia shore. Robey was at the time an overseer for Colonel Cox.

tribune

ACTOR WILLIAM H. WALLIS DEAD

A Veteran Artist Who Supported Many Prominent Stars.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 28.—William H. Wallis, a veteran actor, who was associated with Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman, and about all of the leading American Thespians of his time, died at his home in this city, 1633 South Juniper Street, to-day. He celebrated his seventieth birthday on Thursday, and had been ill with Bright's disease since last May.

Mr. Wallis continued on the stage until he was stricken with the disease. He was an intimate of John Wilkes Booth, and when President Lincoln was assassinated, he, with other actor-friends of the murderer, was placed under surveillance. Mr. Wallis secured John McCullough his first engagement—that of supernumery on the boards of the old Arch Street Theatre, in this city. A widow and three sons survive.

An exchange says: Traveling with Clint G. Ford's company is Edwin Brink, an ex-army officer, who saw Lincoln assassinated, and bears the distinction of being the man who entered the theater with John Wilkes Booth on the night President Lincoln was assassinated, and was arrested as an accomplice of the assassin. Although Mr. Brink declines to talk of the tragedy, he says he was the last man who spoke to Booth before he fired the fatal shot. Mr. Brink says he knew Booth and played with him when a boy. He says the talk that Lincoln's assassin is still alive is all bosh, as he saw Booth lying dead on a stretcher before he (Brink) was released as an accomplice. Brink was taken from prison to identify the murderer some weeks after the President had been assassinated. Mr. Brink has followed the profession of an actor since the close of the war. He is about 60 years of age, of a ministerial appearance and of a very meditative disposition. He speaks to no person unless he is spoken to, but is not in the least disagreeable. He declined last night to talk of the tragedy of 1865, saying he only wished he could forget it, as the thought of it brought phantoms before his vision which were anything but pleasant.

